

The University of Chicago

POLITICS IN GEORGIA, 1853-54
THE ORDEAL OF HOWELL COBB

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
DECEMBER, 1945

By

HELEN IONE GREENE

Reprinted from
THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY
Vol. XXX, No. 3, September, 1946

The University of Chicago

POLITICS IN GEORGIA, 1853-54
THE ORDEAL OF HOWELL COBB

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
DECEMBER, 1945

By
HELEN IONE GREENE

Reprinted from
THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY
Vol. XXX, No. 3, September, 1946



Politics in Georgia, 1853-54: The Ordeal of Howell Cobb

By HELEN IONE GREENE*

In the years immediately following the endorsement of the Compromise of 1850 by Georgia's State Convention, politics in that State took a turn which meant a great deal to the future. The most obvious fact in the period after 1850 was the triumph of the Democrats, in contrast to the previous neck-and-neck position they had maintained with the Whigs in the generation before 1850. And in the Democratic party, where a man must have a position if he was to count for anything in public affairs, Howell Cobb lost his leadership to the radical Southern Rights men. Had he been able to preserve his accustomed moderation, so notable in all his previous career, the history of his State, and even of the nation, might have been different.

Two distinct wings of the Democratic party existed in Georgia, as they did in the other Southern States — namely, the Union group dating back to Jackson's leadership, and the Southern Rights faction professing Calhoun's gospel.¹ Since his election in 1842, at the age of twenty-six, as Representative of a "Cherokee" constituency, Howell Cobb of Athens had been recognized as the leader of Georgia's Union Democrats. To him, Calhoun's separatism was anathema. When the crisis over slavery in the Mexican cession was precipitated in 1850, Cobb joined with moderate Northern Democrats and Whigs to push the Compromise measures through Congress, and then hurried home to combine forces with the Georgia Whigs and see that his State endorsed the settlement.² His standing in the Democratic party was indicated by his election as Speaker, in 1849, when the Whigs lost the national lower House to their rivals. When he was elected Governor in 1851, by the same coalition of Whigs

* Dr. Greene is a member of the faculty of the Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville.

1. This article is part of a larger study, "Politics in Georgia, 1830-1854," presented to the Department of History, the University of Chicago, as a dissertation for the Ph. D. degree, in 1945. Chapters V and VI deal with the factions in Georgia parties before 1850.

2. R. P. Brooks, "Howell Cobb and the Crisis of 1850," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, IV, 3 (Dec., 1917), 277-98, is probably the best treatment of this topic.

and Union Democrats — known as Constitutional Union men — which had endorsed the Compromise, his position seemed secure. It seems evident that he hoped to carry these “moderate men” of Georgia with him in national politics, either into a third party which would attract the “sound” portions of both parties, or into the national Democratic fold. Before it was clear that his hopes were vain, the election of 1852 loomed up, and Cobb failed to take his stand in time. The Southern Rights Democrats held their State convention early, got on the bandwagon at the national convention, and were recognized as the legitimate party men in Georgia. Too late, Cobb rallied, saw that the Whigs would not follow him in the Presidential campaign, and declared his allegiance to the Pierce ticket. His Union disciples in north-east Georgia were outraged at Cobb’s treatment by the Southern Rights men, and so confused were all Democrats that only a light vote was cast in the State. Had the Whigs not been even more divided among themselves, Pierce might not have carried Georgia.³

The appointments of Pierce clearly showed the influence of Southern Rights Democrats, but Cobb, believing that such an appearance was not intentional, kept up his hope for reinstatement of his Union Democrats in the party councils. The State election in 1853 also failed to bring out a large vote, reflecting the people’s confusion at their leaders’ division, and made it clear that Southern Rights men should bid high for Cobb’s Union group and secure an outright majority of the State’s electorate thereby. The Whig-Constitutional Union party, without Cobb’s Cherokee followers, could never hope to carry a majority again in Georgia. While some moderate men, such as James Gardner of the *Augusta Constitutionalist*, urged that the Southern Rights faction owed much to Cobb and should give him proper recognition, their policy did not prevail. The progress of events in 1853-54 made it unmistakably plain to Cobb that he would not be met halfway, but must himself go the whole length of subordination to the Southern Rights leadership, if a reconciliation were effected.

One of the most outspoken of Calhoun’s disciples in Georgia was Samuel J. Ray, editor of the *Georgia Telegraph* in Macon. He had noted, in connection with the election of 1852, that Georgia was the only one among the older Southern States not

3. Greene, “Politics in Georgia,” Ch. VI.

to lose electoral votes after the census of 1850. It was all the more important, then, that the voice of the South should be united and its influence not dissipated by dissension in the ranks.⁴ Yet this editor denounced the efforts of other Georgia Democrats to promote a union of the party by conciliating the Cobb men. Suggestions that the appointment of Cobb to Pierce's cabinet would be a proper move were met with indignant denial.⁵ The *Macon Journal & Messenger* (Whig-Constitutional Union) teasingly suggested that Cobb was the very man for a cabinet post, in recognition of Georgia's ten votes for Pierce; the *Telegraph* hoped that Pierce would "fully realize the importance of calling into his cabinet men who really represent[ed] the views of their party at home," and was "far from believing that he [would] . . . be so greatly infatuated as to make an endorsement of a Whig compromise the test of Democratic orthodoxy."⁶ James Gardner had suggested either Charles J. McDonald, ultra-Southern Rights man, or Herschel V. Johnson, who had been willing (like Gardner) to remake the Democratic electoral ticket in Georgia in 1852 to include Union men and conciliate Cobb — as deserving a cabinet seat.⁷ D. C. Campbell of the *Federal Union* had indirectly suggested Cobb for such a post, and drew a stormy rebuke from the *Telegraph*.⁸ When the Milledgeville editor denied that he had meant to endorse Cobb for such an important appointment, the *Telegraph* tartly observed: "*Quere* — What the devil did the *Federal Union* mean?"⁹

There was, nevertheless, keen interest on the part of Cobb himself and his friends in the possibility of Pierce's so arranging his cabinet as to represent the Union Democrats. Even before the

4. *Georgia Telegraph*, Nov. 2, 1852. North Carolina and South Carolina each lost one electoral vote (and Representative); Virginia lost two, while Mississippi and Arkansas each gained one. Illinois and Missouri each gained two; Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania each gained one, while New York, New Hampshire, and Vermont each lost one. After the 1840 census, Georgia had dropped from nine Representatives to eight; therefore, to have held her own in the last decade was no small achievement.

5. *Ibid.*, Nov. 9, 1852. New men were needed in the new cabinet, not old ones who had occupied the stage since Jackson's day. "McDonald of Georgia" deserved a seat, or Davis of Mississippi.

6. *Ibid.*, Nov. 16, 1852.

7. *Southern Recorder*, Aug. 31, 1852.

8. *Georgia Telegraph*, Dec. 7, 1852: "To say that the appointment of Gov. Cobb is necessary for the purposes of conciliation, is sheer nonsense. Who are the men to be conciliated? Henry R. Jackson, Garnet Andrews, and indeed, all the leading spirits among the Union Democrats, with the exception of Mr. Cobb, himself, voted for the regular ticket, and do not require a bribe to be made sure in their allegiance. . . . Mr. Cobb did not sustain the Electors who cast the vote of Georgia for Gen. Pierce. He does not represent the view of the party, and he knows it; and that single fact ought to settle his pretensions to a Cabinet appointment."

9. *Ibid.*, Dec. 14, 1852.

election Francis J. Grund, a newspaper man in Philadelphia, had written Cobb that although "the coalition" (of Southern Rights and free-soil Democrats) would carry Pennsylvania and probably elect Pierce, he was doubtful that the two wings could stay together after the inauguration. There was talk in Pennsylvania of "reviving the Polk Cabinet, with James Buchanan at the head," which Grund hoped was only idle rumor. Pierce's appointments would indicate his future policy, and the "friends of the Union generally" hoped that wise counsels would guide him.¹⁰ George W. Jones of Tennessee, devoted friend of Cobb in Congress, wrote that little could be heard (in early December) about Pierce's intentions, but that "strong efforts . . . [would be] made to prevent the appointment of any *Union Democrat* from the South to the head of the Department [of State]." Jones believed, however, that Pierce had "too much good sense" not to realize that "but for the Union Democrats of the South there would have been no National Democratic party" to have supported and elected Pierce President.¹¹ Lewis Cass, whom most of Cobb's friends in the 1852 convention had tried to nominate, wrote that he had "no communication, none at all, with Gen. Pierce direct or indirect, verbal or written." He had hoped for an appointment for Cobb, but could give "no other reason to expect it than your own claims and the public good."¹² In February, George W. Jones was still in doubt, but reported that the Free-soiler Dix of New York would "*not be*" in the cabinet, while rumor said that both Howell Cobb and Jefferson Davis would "*certainly be*" in it.¹³

Fears of Union men as to Pierce's appointments were justified.

10. Francis J. Grund to Howell Cobb, Oct. 29, 1852, in U. B. Phillips, ed., *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb* [The Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1911, II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912)], p. 321. (This reference is cited hereafter as *Correspondence*.)

11. George W. Jones to Cobb, Dec. 12, 1852, in *Ga. Hist. Quart.*, V, 1 (March, 1921), 63-64: "Pierce's position as I understand it is yours and mine. . . . And should he abandon them [the Union Democrats] or exclude them from his confidence and counsels, he will find before the close of his administration that he had committed a fatal mistake."

12. Lewis Cass to Cobb, Dec. 18, 1852, *Correspondence*, 322. Cass had warned Pierce "against answering any letters" and had a "very satisfactory reply," but not any other word from him. "There are a thousand speculations as to the composition of the Cabinet, but they are entitled to no attention. . . . I wish I could have given you more satisfactory information, but it is out of my power."

13. George W. Jones to Cobb, Feb. 11, 1853, *ibid.*, 323: "Judging from the present rumors, and what seems to be settled public opinion here, the prospects before us are much more promising than they were a short time since." Jones liked the idea of Marcy of New York in the State Department. He also observed, "I believe almost every Democrat in the present Congress who has not been elected to the next Congress, and does not expect to be, is an applicant for office."

In mid-February Cobb's friend Thomas D. Harris wrote that Speaker Boyd believed "Jef. Davis is certainly in the cabinet, and *fears* greatly that Cushing is also." Knowing Cobb's "anxiety to hear anything and everything in connexion with the Cabinet," Harris promised to write him every forty-eight hours until things were settled.¹⁴ Soon his worst fears were confirmed — both Davis and Dobbin, the Southern men in Pierce's cabinet, were Southern Rights Democrats. George W. Jones, ever the optimist, wrote that Pierce's inaugural speech, after all, was excellent — "It could not be better." He understood, also, that every "member of the Cabinet before his appointment was furnished with a copy of that Inaugural, and his adoption of, and concurrence therewith, made a *sine qua non* to his appointment." If they did not cooperate, they could not stay in the cabinet. With an enthusiasm which could hardly have stirred a sympathetic response in Cobb, Jones concluded: "What a triumph for you and me! We have contended for principles; we have seen their triumph. Others have offices; very well."¹⁵

From the office of the Second Auditor in the Navy Department, Philip Clayton of Athens likewise wrote consolingly to Cobb of Pierce's inauguration speech:

The Union party could not have elected one of their own men who could have so completely programmed their doctrines. Stevens & Toombs & Dawson swear by the inaugural & say if Pierce carries out his principles they will sustain his administration. . . . While some of our friends will no doubt think it strange that Dobbin & Davis two fire-eaters should hold places in the Cabinet, I conceive that even their acceptance enhances the Union victory. . . . My own impression is that Gen. Pierce has committed but one error, & that no doubt has been brought about by over-estimating the high-toned chivalry of the Southern fire-eaters. . . . I think he should have given the Union men a personal triumph in appointing you as one of his Cabinet. . . . The time has not come to know the operating causes in the appointments. I will learn them after awhile, & will keep you advised.¹⁶

If the ex-Whigs in Congress, Toombs, Stephens, and Dawson, did swear by the inaugural of Pierce, they were no different from their press at home. The *Georgia Journal & Messenger*, true enough, had prophesied in January that the posts of honor and trust would be "awarded to ultra-Southern and ultra-Northern men. . . . General Pierce . . . must consult the interests and feelings of each faction of the Democracy, and make his Cabinet

14. Thomas D. Harris to Cobb, Feb. 15, 1853, *ibid.*, 325.

15. George W. Jones to Cobb, Mar. 10, 1853, *ibid.*, 326.

16. Philip Clayton to Cobb, Mar. 7, 1853, *Ga. Hist. Quart.*, VI, 1 (March, 1922), 35.

a piece of mosaic work, where every Democrat shall see himself represented."¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Whig press generally was pleased with the inaugural and praised it, in a manner indicating unusual friendliness for the Democratic party.¹⁸ The Democrats, for their part, evidently suspected kind words from their one-time critics, and warned that they did seek converts among such people as, for instance, their old foe, Robert Toombs.¹⁹

The Whigs of the South would indeed have no choice but to join the Democrats — or, unthinkable alternative, retire from the national scene — unless they could force the Whig party in the North to abandon its courting of the Free-soil vote. Their efforts to purge both parties of their anti-slavery wings and unite the "sound" men in a national Union party had failed. Toombs, indicating his pessimism as to the Whigs' national future, wrote to Crittenden:

The Presidential election went very much as I hoped and expected, except in Tenn. and Kentucky [which went for Scott]. . . . [The] Northern Whigs . . . have no excuse now for not seeing the truth. . . . The nation with singular unanimity, has determined to take a man without claims or qualifications, surrounded by as dirty a lot of political gangsters as ever Catiline assembled, rather than the canting hypocrites who brought out Genl. Scot. . . . We can never have peace and security with Seward, Greeley and Co. in the ascendant in our national counsels, and we had better purchase them by the destruction of the Whig party than of the Union. If the Whig party is incapable of rising to the same standard of nationality as the motley crew which opposes it under the name of Democracy, it is entitled to no resurrection. It will have none.

Further, Toombs hoped that the defeat of Scott had "satisfied the Northern Whigs that free-soil don't [*sic*] pay any better at the North than at the South."²⁰ If his old party refused to mend its ways, Robert Toombs would not long remain a Whig.

17. *Georgia Journal & Messenger*, Jan. 19, 1853.

18. *Southern Recorder*, Mar. 29, 1853: "With scarcely an important exception, the conservative press throughout the country, with a liberality and cordiality unexampled, have expressed their approbation of the policy . . . of the new Administration, so far as it has been disclosed. . . . One would have supposed . . . that all good men would have greeted these auspicious demonstrations of principle over-riding men, as the dawn of a new and hopeful era in the history of political parties. But not so. . . . [However, neither] the noisy and discourteous clamor of the secession democratic press of the South, nor the sneers of the free soil Whig press of the North, . . . will drive the Union Whigs of the country into a hostile attitude to an administrative policy which is based upon their own principles. . . . So long as he [Pierce] stands by the Constitution and the Union, the rights of the South and the interests of the whole country, so long will the Whigs stand by him without hesitation, or hope of political reward."

19. *Georgia Telegraph*, Nov. 2, 1852: "We very much fear lest Mr. Robert Toombs, embracing the opportunity afforded him by the smoke . . . shall slip into the Democratic ranks, and with a banner in his hand, congratulate us on our triumph. The zeal of a renegade is always remarkable."

20. Toombs to John J. Crittenden, Dec. 15, 1852, *Correspondence*, 322.

Without the Union Democrats' votes, neither the Southern Rights Democrats nor the old Whigs of Georgia could hope, in any full balloting, to muster a majority. With kind words, therefore, and also with reminders of the old Calhoun men's enmity, the Union-Whig press courted Howell Cobb and his followers.²¹ The death of Samuel J. Ray (editor of the *Georgia Telegraph*) of Macon, in January, 1853, made it easier for the Southern Rights men, also, to take a conciliatory tone towards Cobb. Ray, who was a passionate admirer of Calhoun—he was very proud that his hero had spoken kindly of him in his last days—spoke of Cobb with more bitterness than any other editor. Only thirty-eight at the time of his death, he had, although suffering “for many months from hemorrhage of the lungs,” continued his active and gifted editorship of the *Telegraph* until a few days before the end.²² Within a short time the new editors, H. K. Green, J. M. Green, and P. Tracy, were calling for a “Reunion of the Democratic Party,” with a burying of that hatchet, “the abstract right of secession,” which was the only difference between Southern Rights and Union wings.²³ The *Southern Recorder* hoped that Union Democrats would scorn such overtures for the hypocrisy that they were.²⁴ Both sides were preparing for the State elections of 1853, nominations for which must be ready in June.

In March Howell Cobb, perhaps mindful of the advantage gained in the 1852 campaign by his rivals' coming out early, placed himself on record as favoring a reunion of both wings of the Democrats in Georgia. In a public letter, replying to inquiries as to the “proper course” for the Union Democrats to take, he was careful to claim his place as a consistent Democrat from the time of Jackson. Reviewing the breakup of the party

21. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 18, 1853. Gen. John W. A. Sanford, of Baldwin County, had been a Constitutional Union man, and the editor hoped he would not now return to his former friends, the Democrats. *Ibid.*, Feb. 1, Feb. 15, 1853—editorials noting a move in the Cherokee counties to unite the two wings of the Democracy, and warning the Union men not to be deceived by Southern Rights lures. *Ibid.*, Mar. 22, 1853: “We think the Union Democrats at the South have a right to be dissatisfied, when the claims of such men as Cobb, Downs and others, who contributed so largely to give ascendancy to the very measures and principles which in the late Presidential contest formed chiefly the basis of party action and secured such overwhelming party success, are overlooked, and men openly hostile to the compromise, who were ready to break up the Union, on account of its passage, . . . are promoted to the highest posts in the Government. That Gov. Cobb . . . would have greatly strengthened the new Administration, all who are acquainted with his tact and skill as a political leader, and his eminent administrative abilities, will readily concede.”

22. *Georgia Telegraph*, Jan. 11, 1853, obituary of Samuel J. Ray, announcing his death as of January 6.

23. *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 1853.

24. *Southern Recorder*, Feb. 15, 1853.

in Georgia over the Compromise, and the acceptance of that settlement by the national Democratic party and President Pierce, he declared his confidence that "any Union man, whether whig or democrat," could safely accept Pierce. The inaugural fulfilled earlier pledges. Desiring a "re-union of the Democratic party," he saw only two obstacles: (1) a "radical difference of opinion between the two wings of the party on the doctrine of 'secession'" had marked a real divergence. Yet, he asked, had "the same thing . . . not been true of the party for the last twenty years, at least?" Cobb believed that it was a "familiar fact" that "the Jackson democrats held the doctrine as laid down by that venerated patriot in his message to Congress and his proclamation to South Carolina; the Calhoun democrats at the same time contended for the right of secession as advocated by their distinguished leader — the followers of each" had kept "the faith of their respective leaders, and . . . [would] in all probability continue to do so." This abstract right should not be made a cause of division until someone should try to make it a test of party loyalty, or to enforce it. (2) Hard feelings had been caused between persons in each wing of the party, by the recent occurrences. Cobb believed that such feelings had been greatly exaggerated, and that men would soon feel friendly to both wings of their old party. As to reorganizing the Union party, that was no longer necessary. Only for the crisis of 1850-51 had it been needed, and it had succeeded in carrying the Compromise. Union men could hope for no national separate party. This was demonstrated by the acts of Georgia Whigs who, in 1852, rather than accept Pierce — who stood on their own Union principles — had thrown away their votes on hopeless candidates.²⁵

The *Southern Recorder*, while disappointed at Cobb's stand, was mild in its reproof.²⁶ It also warned Union men who might believe that Southern Rights Democrats would be fair to them, that they would be lured into camp by such Compromise men as the new editors of the *Telegraph* and Gardner of the *Constitutionalist*, and then sacrificed by the unforgiving extrem-

25. Howell Cobb to Thomas Morris of Carnesville (in reply to the latter's inquiry of March 7, 1853), March 21, 1853, in *Southern Recorder*, Apr. 12, 1853.

26. *Southern Recorder*, Apr. 19, 1853. Cobb was reminded that in 1851 he had not been so casual about secession, and warned that it was still not safe to minimise the evil of Calhoun influence.

ists who really controlled the party in Georgia.²⁷ Besides, there were no genuine Democrats left in Georgia, but only disunionist wolves parading in sheep's clothing.²⁸ Attention was called to Pierce's appointments in Georgia, which confirmed the Whig prophecy that the Southern Rights men would "seize the local offices, and control everything in their own way."²⁹ If the Union Democrats were not soon won over, so that they would feel welcome and appreciated in the national Democratic fold, the Union-Whig leaders might well cherish the hope that the State elections of 1853 would give them the Cobb men as allies. That would mean another victory.

Dr. Richard Arnold of Savannah, devoted friend of Cobb and of his Savannah cousin, Judge Henry R. Jackson, wrote to John W. Forney (Buchanan's friend in Philadelphia) that appointments in Georgia were not satisfactory to the Union Democrats and would prevent a healing of the breach between them and the majority wing of their party.

What is the reason that no move [?] has been made as to the Post Office and the Appraiserships. I write again most earnestly to urge Judge Henry [Jackson] for the first and Mr. Thos. Purse for the second. . . . The Union Democrats of Georgia have been a little sore about appointments, and this would go very far to alleviate any ill feeling on that ground. . . . The union of the two wings in our last campaign was owing to our set in Savannah and Judge Jackson was more instrumental in carrying out the result of our consultations than any other man. . . . If I can possibly spare the time I will go with Ward to our gubernatorial Convention and endeavor with him to harmonize all discordant elements. There will be a great effort here at any rate. The Georgian Newspaper is unfortunately too touchy and capricious, else we might use it occasionally. . . . One other point, Cobb is our standard bearer, our personal & political friend, & we are determined to stick to him at all hazards. We have a plan here to get Hillyer off the track and let Cobb run for Congress in his old District.³⁰

27. *Ibid.*, April 26, 1853. For example, the *Federal Union* was said to favor the policy "for the soft shells to stand complacently at the door of the democratic fold, and with smiles and loving words bid Union Democrats enter, whilst the hard-shells noose, skin and spit them. Alas for those who reach the culinary department of fire-eating democracy."

28. *Ibid.*, Apr. 5, 1853: ". . . the popular and honored name of 'Democrat' . . . improperly appropriated to itself by the disunion and secession 'organization'."

29. *Ibid.*, Mar. 29, 1853: "Hence we see Messrs. Flournoy, Warner, and other deserters from the Union Party preferred to those gentlemen [Gov. Cobb, Judge Andrews, Gen. Wofford, Judges Baxter and James Jackson, Dr. Collins] . . ."

30. R. D. Arnold to J. W. Forney, May 15, 1853, in R. H. Shryock, ed., *The Letters of Richard D. Arnold* [Historical Papers, Published by the Trinity College Historical Society, XVIII-XIX (Durham: Duke University Press, 1929)], 63-64. (This reference is cited hereafter as *Arnold Letters*.)

To his trusty correspondent, George W. Jones, Cobb evidently expressed his own dissatisfaction with Pierce's appointments. Even that perennial optimist was, he admitted, somewhat worried by the new Administration's policies. "Agreeing" with Cobb, Jones wrote — "things have been going on after a strange fashion at Washington of late." President Pierce "seems to have determined to avow and act upon the principles of Constitutional Union men, and distribute the patronage among the fire-eaters and free-soilers. Various causes may press upon the President the course which has given things the appearance they seem to wear." Jones especially regretted Pierce's appointments because they would hurt the Democrats in the South in coming elections for Congress.³¹ When the Savannah appointments so important to Dr. Arnold were announced in June, they showed no evidence of a desire to conciliate Union men. The offices went to Southern Rights leaders.³²

Cobb seemed determined, nevertheless, to assert his claims to notice by the Pierce Administration. In July he received a most conciliatory letter from John W. Forney, stating that James Gardner (editor of the potent Augusta *Constitutionalist*) had called at the White House, that Pierce was "greatly pleased" at Gardner's "course," and that the President "said that G. was greatly your friend and said you had served them (the S [outhern] R [ights] men) nobly and told P. they were resolved you should go to the U. S. Senate." Forney was going to New York soon, "to see Buck off," — Buchanan had received the top diplomatic appointment, to the Court of St. James — and hoped to see Cobb there. At the same time, he admitted that there was no hope of revoking certain appointments which Cobb evidently had protested.³³ If Cobb could hope for such a gesture of re-

31. George W. Jones to Cobb, May 19, 1853, *Correspondence*, 327-28. Jones saw some good in the appointment of the fire-eater Soule, of Louisiana, as minister to Spain. Slidell, who would replace Soule in the Senate, was a reasonable man; and in Madrid Soule would be under Pierce's control, as he had not been in the Senate.

32. *Georgia Telegraph*, June 14, 1853: The Savannah postoffice went to Solomon Cohen, leader of the Southern Rights delegation to Baltimore in 1852; the appraiserships, to Robert McKay and William J. McIntosh. The Columbus postoffice went to Robert C. Forsyth, brother of John Forsyth who edited the Southern Rights *Times*, and brother-in-law of Alfred Iverson who had turned against Cobb after securing his aid in 1849 in his elevation to the State bench. James A. Nesbit had the Macon postoffice. R. B. Hilton, the "touchy" editor of the *Georgian* in Savannah, secured a *charge*-ship. James Smythe, Southern Rights Whig editor in Augusta, got the postoffice there.

33. James W. Forney to Cobb, July 29, 1853, *Correspondence*, 330: "Daniel is appointed, but the President was amazed when I told him how you had been assailed by him, and was evidently deeply mortified and chagrined. He said if he had known it things would have been very different. Campbell [Postmaster General] avowed his ignorance of it in positive terms."

conciliation as his own appointment to the Senate, surely his Union Democrats could feel that their value was fully recognized. The breach in his party would yet be healed, and while he believed this, he would not throw in his lot again with the Georgia Whigs.

The Whigs had not only the loss of their Union Democratic allies, but a serious split in their own ranks as well, to worry them. Before the 1852 campaign closed, bitter words had been printed against Toombs and Stephens and all those who with them had abandoned the regular Whig ticket.³⁴ It was not clear that these independent Whigs, who had voted for Webster, would be accepted again as leaders. The editor of the *Southern Recorder* apparently believed that the name "Union" would make it possible for men to forget their sore feelings about the 1852 election, and he suggested that the name "Whig," therefore, be relegated to the limbo where the issues connected with it had already fallen.³⁵ He rebuked the movement in Baldwin County of a "regular" Whig group, led by the most influential man in the party, Augustus H. Kenan, to revive the party under its old name.³⁶ For his pains, the editor (Orme) was denounced by Kenan.³⁷ Such disagreements could prove fatal to their party's chances in the approaching State elections. The *Macon Journal & Messenger* urged all Whigs, both Scott and Webster men, to unite in nominating and electing a good governor and legislature for Georgia.³⁸ In the absence of any "regularly organized Union or Whig party, or Executive Committee," the *Southern Recorder* took the initiative in calling "our Gubernatorial convention." The editor, in summoning such a meeting, was careful to mention that no Webster-Whig paper had suggested a nominee, but that the Scott-Whig *Reporter* of LaGrange and the *Griffin Union* had suggested Charles J. Jenkins and Edward Y. Hill — both Webster supporters in 1852.³⁹

34. *Southern Recorder*, Aug. 3, 17, Sept. 28, 1852, letters of "Whig" and "Old Whig."

35. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1853. Democrats insisted on calling their opponents "Whigs" instead of a "Union" party, because the latter was a more powerful name. It should be kept.

36. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1853, account of a meeting in Milledgeville, May 7, which, led by Kenan, resolved that "the object for which the Constitutional Union Party was organized being accomplished," voters in Georgia should return to "the former parties." It would be pure "Quixotism" to stand in *formal array*, for . . . defending what is not threatened."

37. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1853, exchange of letters between Orme and Kenan.

38. *Georgia Telegraph*, May 3, 1853. The Democrats were solicitous lest the trusting Scott Whigs be deceived into rejoining the renegade Webster men.

39. *Southern Recorder*, Apr. 26, 1853. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1853; the editor would be "content with whatever name our Convention shall recognise."

The Whig-Union leaders, although Cobb himself left no doubt as to his intention to have nothing to do with them, plainly hoped to play upon the dissatisfaction of other Union Democrats and thereby perpetuate the cleavage in their rivals' ranks. Complimentary things, therefore, were said about Cobb and his management of State affairs, particularly his improvements in the Western and Atlantic railroad, even while it was regretted that "thanks cannot be awarded him as a politician at the hands of the Union Party."⁴⁰ An attack on Cobb by the Southern Rights *Democrat* of Columbus—which was immediately deprecated by the *Telegraph*, but at which the Cobb editor of the *Southern Banner* (Hopkins Holsey) took offense⁴¹—made fine material for Union editors.⁴² If Cobb's friends were ignorant of such baseness on the part of Southern Rights Democrats, it was not because their Whig friends failed to point it out.

Bearing out the charge that the Democratic opponents of the Compromise of 1850 had actually intended disunion, a new paper, the *Cornerstone*, was started in Columbus by General (in the State Militia) James N. Bethune. Its editorials furnished ideal ammunition for the Whig-Union press, and considerable embarrassment for Bethune's own friends. He wrote, for instance:

There was, two or three years ago, in this part of the country, a party which called itself—"The great Southern Rights party," but it is gone, and we now hear nothing of it—having heard nothing of any formal dissolution of it, we . . . infer, that those who composed it, . . . satisfied that they were wrong, have quietly slipped off. . . . Our own opinion is that the great majority of those . . . found in its ranks, were there from a mistake in calculations, as to its popularity,—and having found out their mistake, they are no longer Southern Rights, but good Union Democratic men, who are willing to waive even "the right of secession." There is now at the South a "great Democratic party." The object of that . . . is to take to themselves whatever of the spoils, the people of the North can spare, or are willing to give them, to hold on to "this glorious Union."⁴³

40. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1853, report of the legislative committee appointed to investigate the Western and Atlantic (the State-owned railroad between Atlanta and Chattanooga).

41. *Georgia Telegraph*, May 3, 1853. Hopkins Holsey was urged not to believe that "incendiary sheets" such as the *Southern Democrat* spoke for most of the Southern Rights men, and quoted, as proof, approving comments on Cobb from the *Federal Union*.

42. *Southern Recorder*, May 3, 1853. The *Georgian and Federal Union* had been denounced by the *Southern Democrat* for "bbling, cooing, bowing and scraping to Gov. Cobb, and turning somersets for his amusements." The *Recorder*, pouring salt on the wound, observed—"It would be quite funny if the Secessionists at last caved, and had not only to receive Gov. Cobb as a leader, but also as the true exponent of their principles."

43. *Southern Recorder*, Mar. 29, 1853, quoting the *Cornerstone* (no date given).

Naturally, the Whig-Union press made the most of Bethune's extremist views, and maintained that he, unlike most of his Southern Rights colleagues, was an honest man who refused to conceal his principles for patronage.⁴⁴ When the *Athens Banner* was finally bought from Hopkins Holsey, who seemed unable to trust the Southern Rights Democrats, and put under the editorship of James Sledge, pledged to a reconciliation of all Democrats, the change was hailed by the *Telegraph* as a happy omen.⁴⁵ The *Southern Recorder*, however, quickly observed: "It was . . . under the efficient direction of Col. Holsey . . . the able and honest advocate and exponent of Union principles, and the supporter of Union men." Now it had been "bought up by a company of gentlemen, and . . . [was] considered the OFFICIAL organ of the new 'coalition.' The people believed Mr. Cobb and the *Banner* in 1850-'51 and will not change *their* record to accommodate either in 1853."⁴⁶

It was charged, in later years, that the men who bought out Hopkins Holsey and "silenced his batteries" were "Gov. Cobb, Judge Hillyer, Mr. Hull, and perhaps others," who had made up their minds to back Herschel V. Johnson for the Democratic nomination in 1853, and could not persuade Holsey to accept him.⁴⁷ At any rate, Cobb did stand by the Southern Rights Democrats, and, joining in the State convention in June, helped to nominate Herschel V. Johnson as candidate for the governorship. The Whig-Union press charged that Cobb helped Johnson, a "disunionist," because the latter was pledged to see that,

44. *Georgia Journal & Messenger*, Feb. 9, 1853: "The Corner Stone—This is the title of a new paper, the first number of which we have received, published at Columbus, Ga., and edited by General Jas. N. Bethune. In his prospectus . . . the Editor disavows any connection or sympathy with any party in the Union or the State, and declared that 'believing the General Government to be corrupt in all its parts—holding that it belongs to, and is, and will be administered for the benefit of the North alone—that in all respects, and under all circumstances, the political connection between the two sections is productive of evil, and only evil to the South, he shall advocate its dissolution.' We cannot be expected to wish him success in this undertaking, but we may afford to bear with him in the bold and candid declaration of his design, as we believe that the Union will exist—great, prosperous, and free—when Corner Stones more solid and enduring than that of our contemporary, have crumbled into dust. . . . General Bethune . . . occupies the same positions which many Southern Rights men occupied in 1850-'51, and expresses the opinions which a majority of them still entertain, though policy may keep their lips hermetically sealed."

45. *Georgia Telegraph*, May 17, 1853.

46. *Southern Recorder*, June 21, 1853.

47. *Southern Watchman* (successor to the *Southern Whig* in Athens) Mar. 22, 1855. A Correspondent, "Samuel," member of the new American party then attracting many ex-Whigs of Georgia, wrote: "All these charges were made, . . . They may have been false; but if ever contradicted, I have not seen the denial." The dissatisfaction of Cobb, John B. Lamar, Dr. Arnold, and other Union Democrats over their lack of a press had been expressed freely, before the spring of 1853.

when the State legislature chose a Senator at its approaching session, Cobb should have that position.⁴⁸ Although he had been one of the Southern Rights electors who were willing, in 1852, to placate Cobb's Union men by remaking the Democratic electoral ticket so as to include four of them, Johnson was not so clearly entitled to Union support as was Cobb's devoted friend, John Henry Lumpkin of Rome. Joseph E. Brown, a rising Southern Rights Democrat in the Cherokee section (which was almost solidly Union Democratic), commented on Lumpkin's keen desire for the nomination as a matter that could be adjusted—the "great difficulty up there was, that they had too many great men, . . ."⁴⁹ Tenant Lomax, editor (since John Forsyth's removal to Mobile) of the *Columbus Times & Sentinel*, put the motion, which was adopted, that a two-thirds vote be required for the nomination. Evidently Lumpkin's friends realized that he could not secure so many Southern Rights votes, and consequently did not present his name. Cobb must have been glad not to be forced into a public choice between his warm personal friend and that candidate, Johnson, who might better unite the party's factions. On the first ballot Johnson received 129 votes.⁵⁰ Lumpkin wrote later that he was "satisfied with the nomination and would give it a cordial support," although he should have liked "very much to close" his political career with the governorship.⁵¹

With Howell Cobb so determinedly attached to the Southern Rights Democrats, the Union-Whig party might well have felt gloomy about their prospects in the election. They gave no

48. *Southern Recorder*, June 21, 1853: "Still some strange fatality seems to have befallen all those Union Democrats who have identified themselves with re-organized Democracy. . . . [The] expectation is held out, we understand, that the patriotic services of Gov. Cobb, in behalf of Judge Johnson, are to be rewarded with Senatorial robes." Johnson, it was said, would canvass the State to see that members of the legislature were elected with the understanding that they support Cobb for Senator.

49. *Ibid.*, comments on the Democratic convention—"A very intelligent and worthy gentleman is Mr. Brown."

50. *Georgia Telegraph*, June 21, 1853, account of the Democratic Convention. Hiram Warner, a strong Union man in 1850-51, who had returned to the party early in 1852, received only twenty-four votes, while Henry G. Lamar, Southern Rights Democrat of Macon, received seventy-nine, and Hugh Haralson, of the same extreme group, had seventy-one.

51. John H. Lumpkin to Cobb, July 2, 1853, *Correspondence*, 329-30. Lumpkin wrote to thank Cobb for his account of the gubernatorial nomination, and regretted that his own name had been put up by county meetings of Cherokee Union Democratic friends. Elijah Chastain had been renominated for Congress by the Fifth District (in which Rome was), but his race would be contested by the patron of Joseph E. Brown, Dr. John Lewis, and by Lewis Tumlin, as an independent.

hint of such feelings, however, in preparing for their own State meeting. Coming together at Milledgeville, a few days after the united Democrats had convened there, the Whigs planned a strategy which would smooth all difficulties between their own wings. Alexander Stephens, if we may judge from a letter written to Cobb by his adviser and brother-in-law, John B. Lamar, had made overtures to Cobb very early in the year. Lamar warned that Stephens would do Cobb no good.⁵² Evidently Stephens was not even sure of his footing in the old Whig ranks, after his splitting their vote in 1852 with his Webster ticket. His coming to the convention was made to seem quite casual—the *Recorder* “hoped” that, on his way to visit his brother in Hancock County, Stephens could come to the “Union” meeting.⁵³ He was warmly welcomed, however, as was Robert Toombs, and the campaign was launched as a “Union,” not a Whig, undertaking. Thus the hurt of “regular” Whigs might not be recalled over their onetime leaders’ having deserted the national Whig ticket.

The committee on resolutions, in fact, was headed by Robert Toombs, and indicated the intention to attack Pierce’s Administration, in its declaration: “That . . . we consider the rights of the Southern States in great and imminent danger, and the principles of the Georgia Platform greatly jeopardized by any political party whatever its name, which recognizes Abolitionists and Free-Soilers as worthy of public honors and public emoluments.”⁵⁴ The convention chose as its presiding officer John W. A. Sanford, long a prominent Democrat of Baldwin County, who chose to stay with the “conservative” Union-Whigs. Charles J. Jenkins of Augusta, who had favored the independent Webster ticket the year before, was nominated for the governorship. As a relative of Senator Berrien, and his intimate friend, Jenkins might hope

52. John B. Lamar to Cobb, Feb. 16, 1853, *ibid.*, 326-27: “Stephens seems to be anxious. When he could have been you last year, he held aloof. Now that he finds himself in ‘coventry’ among his Whig friends in Washington, and needs a friend to help him break up old parties and organize a new one to get him out of his troubles, he looks to you. He mocked at our calamities last year, and I can’t say I feel like crying when his fear cometh this year.”

53. *Southern Recorder*, June 21, 1853. Stephens had recently suffered injury in a railroad accident.

54. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1853, account of the Union-Whig convention of June 22. The resolutions also included one favoring the sale of public lands so as to put funds into the common treasury to benefit all States alike, and another against forcing the American type of government upon any other people—referring to the Democrats’ alleged sympathy for the Lopez expedition to Cuba.

to reconcile the two wings of the old Whigs.⁵⁵ Only fifty-two counties sent delegates to this convention, as compared with eighty represented at the Democratic rally. Despite such a beginning, the Whigs prepared for a strong campaign.

Charges and counter-charges, appeals and contradictions, featured the press of both parties in the months of July, August, and September. Union editors emphasised the favors received by Southern Rights men over Union Democrats, in the nominations for office.⁵⁶ Privately, Union Democrats agreed that this was true.⁵⁷ When the Second District convention of Democrats (in Southwest Georgia) put up Alfred H. Colquitt, son of the prominent Calhoun-Southern Rights leader, Walter T. Colquitt, for Congress, Cobb's friends in that section felt that the election would go against them.⁵⁸ The elder Colquitt, however, known as one of the most powerful evangelical Methodist preachers of his day as well as a successful lawyer, electioneered with his son throughout the section. They were accompanied by the Union man, Absalom H. Chappell, one of the Macon group who had urged Cobb in 1850 to see that the Compromise was adopted quickly, and then come home to popularise it.⁵⁹ Wil-

55. *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1853. The Whig editor rebuked the *Albany Patriot*, whose editorials rivalled those of Samuel J. Ray in excited charges, for accusing Toombs of conniving to nominate Jenkins and have Berrien elected to William Dawson's seat in the U. S. Senate (if the Whigs should win the legislature), so as to keep offices in the same family and reconcile factions. The nomination of F. S. Bartow, son-in-law of Berrien, for Congress in the First District, had likewise been the subject of Democratic charges.

56. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1853, *e. g.*, account of the nomination for Congress in the Fourth District, given to the Southern Rights man William B. Dent, over the Union Democrat Charles Murphy. The latter had been elected in 1851 as a Constitutional Union man. Also *Journal & Messenger*, June 22, 1853, warning that no Whig in Murphy's district, where he was running on an independent Union ticket, should vote for him, after he had been "slaughtered by the Southern Rights Democracy." *Southern Recorder*, June 21, 1853, noting that David J. Bailey, Southern Rights man who in 1851 barely defeated A. H. Chappell for Congress in the Third District, had secured the regular Democratic nomination again.

57. William H. Hull to Howell Cobb (his cousin and law partner), Aug. 16, 1853, *Correspondence*, 334. From Decatur (in DeKalb County) Hull wrote: "The fire-eaters have acted everywhere with their usual good feeling and policy. They have proscribed the Union Democrats wherever they have the power to do so, as for instance in Gwinnett where with a bare majority of the party they have nominated a full ticket of fire-eaters, while in Walton the Union men have given them two."

58. Alexander C. Morton (in Columbus, Colquitt's home), to Cobb, July 2, 1853, *ibid.*, p. 330: "Colquitt has not a political antecedent and will fail to rally the party." The Union-Whig candidate, James Johnson, was expected to carry the Second District by five hundred majority. "The nomination of H. V. Johnson has fallen still-born. Not a shout or an approving word have followed it; even his old friends (the S[outhern] R[ights] Wing) take it coldly." Toombs had just been to Columbus and "rallied the Whigs [who were] . . . enthusiastic for Jenkins."

59. *Georgia Telegraph*, Sept. 6, 1853, notice that Chappell had recently accompanied the two Colquitts to Pulaski County on a political trip. The editor attacked the *Journal & Messenger* for reprinting and supporting charges made in the *Columbus Enquirer*, dragging in Walter T. Colquitt's "Coffin Regiment" talk against the Compromise of 1850, for the purpose of provoking Union Democrats into voting for James Johnson and against Colquitt's son.

liam Hope Hull wrote Cobb that Chappell had announced himself for the Senate seat to be filled by the legislature then awaiting election.⁶⁰ There was more than one way to detach Cobb's friends from his side.

For personal reasons, the promise of the Senate seat to Chappell was embarrassing to Howell Cobb. His wife, born Mary Ann Lamar, was first cousin to Mrs. A. H. Chappell and to her young brother, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar. The latter wrote painfully to Cobb that he had "again become" his political friend, and "should advocate" his "election to the U. S. Senate," but that he had learned that Chappell had "come out as a candidate" and must support him. Lamar, a young lawyer then practising in Covington (seat of Newton County, a Whig stronghold) stated that he "loved and honored Col. Chappell above any other man," and would not be able to give Cobb his vote in the legislature.⁶¹ Cobb's close adviser, William H. Hull, advised him against campaigning for Johnson, as an action unbecoming to the incumbent of the Governor's chair.⁶² Nevertheless, Cobb chose to take the stump, and then for the first time he drew a real denunciation from the Union-Whig press.⁶³ He had been courted by the Southern Rights leaders before the Democratic convention in June,⁶⁴ but evidently he intended to consolidate his position as a Democratic leader in the public mind.

60. W. H. Hull to Cobb, Aug. 16, 1853, *Correspondence*, 334.

61. L. Q. C. Lamar to Cobb, Sept. 21, 1853, *ibid.*, 335.

62. Hull to Cobb, Aug. 16, 1853, *ibid.*, 334. Hull thought that Southern Rights men could not well expect Cobb to campaign, and feared that if he did speak for Johnson, he would alienate many old Jackson-Union men. "As to gaining any votes from the fire-eaters, their hatred of you will end only with life. I do believe that many of them will secretly drop Johnson only because he is understood to be your friend."

63. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 20, 1853. Cobb was accused of cheapening his office by accepting speaking engagements for Johnson. Moreover, in opposing Jenkins, he was attempting "to crush the very men and principles which have given him position and honor. . . . Howell Cobb is now found in alliance with the men who denounced him as a traitor, and joining his efforts with theirs in prostrating the man to whom he is largely indebted for his position and influence." *Ibid.*, Sept. 27, 1853: "Where is the Cobb of 1850-'51? . . . Where is the Johnson of 1850-'51?"

64. Leonidas B. Mercer to Cobb (from Palmyra, in Lee County), Apr. 10, 1852. *Correspondence*, 326-27. Mercer was one of the Executive Committee of the Democratic party, appointed at the "premature" State convention in March, 1852, who had refused to attend the September meeting in Atlanta, as asked by Cobb's Union Democrats, for the purpose of remaking the electoral ticket. He wrote—"Although no Secessionist, I am identified with the so-called wing of the party, as I suppose you know, and am very solicitous for the *thorough* pacification of the party. It was with extreme regret that my illness last summer prevented me from taking any part as one of the Executive Committee in promoting that object. . . . I have the honor to coincide with your Excellency in your views about secession. *Abstract* right of secession would turn out *practical* nonsense, for the *abstract* right might be demonstrated a thousand times, and then when it is put in *practice* it would turn out revolutionary. War would be inevitable, and it would be better to fight for our rights in the Union than out of it. But . . . I hope such a question will never be started again."

The principal point of attack for the Union-Whig press, besides the shabby treatment of Union Democrats by the Southern Rights men, was the Federal appointments of Pierce. Cobb himself defended these, although, said the *Southern Banner* (now a better representative of Cobb's followers than it had been under the editorship of the independent Holsey), he had "expressly stated, . . . that . . . the President had, in his judgment, made some mistakes, . . ." ⁶⁵ The fact that some Union Democrats refused to follow Cobb's lead and bury the hatchet must have been comforting to their onetime allies, the Whigs. Hopkins Holsey, for instance, after leaving the *Southern Banner*, announced as an independent candidate for Congress, and, thought William H. Hull, "could have carried the 6th Dist., if he had come out a month" earlier. ⁶⁶

Robert Toombs and Alexander Stephens exerted themselves without stint in behalf of Jenkins. ⁶⁷ They had to combat the Democratic charge that the Webster Whigs in 1852 had "betrayed" the regular Scott ticket, and that their man, Jenkins, could never be trusted again by the old Whigs of Georgia. ⁶⁸ For awhile it seemed that the "Algerine law" attributed to Jenkins was a real discovery for the Democrats, making him appear a friend to the rich and an enemy to the poor. This law, a local bill applying to Augusta (Jenkins' home), required all the city finances to be controlled by a board of aldermen. These men must each own a thousand dollars' worth of real estate, to be eligible for the office, and could be voted for only by men with an equal amount of property. ⁶⁹ To the defense of Jenkins, however, came that other Augusta Whig, the redoubtable Andrew J. Miller. For many years the State Senator for their district, while Jenkins represented it in the lower chamber, Miller stated that he himself had, after being petitioned to do so by eighty-nine citizens of Augusta, presented the "Algerine law" in the

65. *Southern Banner*, Oct. 6, 1853. In a speech at Kingston, near Rome, Cobb had defended Pierce's appointments, and been attacked for it in the Union-Whig press.

66. W. H. Hull to Cobb, Aug. 16, 1853, *Correspondence*, 334.

67. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 6, 1853, "Messrs. Toombs and Stephens"; *ibid*, Oct. 4, 1853. "Messrs. Stephens and Toombs"—editorials commending their "valuable and indefatigable labors" for Jenkins, and the "abuse they receive everywhere from the opposition press."

68. *Georgia Journal & Messenger*, June 29, 1853, editorial answering the *Telegraph's* attack: "The only difference between the *Telegraph* and Mr. Jenkins . . . is, that he was honest and consistent in his opposition [to Scott] . . . whilst they, after denouncing every man north of Mason and Dixon's line, voted for a man who lived near the frigid zone."

69. *Georgia Telegraph*, July 5, 1853. Toombs was challenged to defend this "act of Jenkins."

Georgia Senate. Jenkins, returning to his seat after a temporary absence, had only followed Miller's lead in supporting the measure.⁷⁰ It was hard to create indignation over a local law, passed many years before, for which Jenkins could not, after all, be held accountable.

No possible issue was overlooked. The fact that Johnson belonged to the Swedenborgian religious sect, a small one with few adherents in Georgia, was pointed out—even while the Union-Whig observer disclaimed any intention of bringing up "personal religion" in a political campaign.⁷¹ Cherokee Georgia, likewise, was reminded that Jenkins, in the hard times of the 1830's, had supported in the legislature those measures which pushed the Western and Atlantic Railroad all the way from Atlanta to the Tennessee River. His 1853 opponents, it was charged, were the very men who had weakened in those difficult years, and favored selling the road "to Carolina."⁷² In a moment of inspiration, a Democratic editor even decided that Jenkins was a "Nashville Convention" man. How could *Union* men vote for one who had advocated a convention they denounced as part of a *disunion* movement? ⁷³ Another point of attack was that Robert Toombs, in the State convention which nominated Jenkins, had deplored the influence in American politics of "Red Republicans, Germans, Jews," and the like. It was known that Henry Clay had, "together with the Whigs of the country, long ago avowed himself a friend to the Native American policy."⁷⁴ This issue, like

70. *Georgia Journal & Messenger*, June 29, 1853. The editor declared that Democrats in Augusta were the men who had asked for the law, and it was, therefore, a "Democratic measure." *Georgia Telegraph*, July 19, 1853, Miller's statement.

71. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 20, 1853, comment on Johnson's addressing the annual commencement at Wesleyan College in July, and the "peculiar notions of Swedenborg."

72. *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1853. The W. & A., "breaking through the mountain barriers of Cherokee, has made Georgia what she is, and arrested the tide of emigration west. . . ."

73. *Georgia Telegraph*, Sept. 6, 1853. In the 1849-50 legislature, Jenkins (obviously trying to forestall the move of Lawton, the Calhoun Democratic leader, for a State convention) had proposed that Georgia should first "seek conference with her slave-holding confederates in a convention proposed for that purpose." In 1832 such a move had defeated the nullification men, and the editor undoubtedly was aware of Jenkins' purpose. The *Southern Banner*, Sept. 29, 1853, defending Johnson, reminded Union men that Jenkins had been, twenty years earlier, an anti-Jackson man. "If you will have no party, that affiliates with any, that ever have been disunionists or freesoilers; then . . . the Democratic party will not suit you; but neither will the Jenkins party—for their present leader was once a Nullifier . . ."

74. *Georgia Telegraph*, Aug. 9, 1853. A letter of Clay to his Savannah friend, John M. Berrien, Oct. 27, 1843 in the *Ga. Hist. Quart.*, XXIX, 1 (March, 1945), 22-41) bears out this contention. Clay sent Berrien a letter "about the Key Stone State from one of its worthiest sons (Mr. J. Cooper, late of the H. of R.) himself a leading Anti-mason, the friend of Mr. Thad Stevens. From that you will perceive that we have reason to hope for a co-operation between the Whigs and Anti-masons hereafter. For the want of it we lost the Legislature, . . ."

most of those dragged out, did not rouse enough enthusiasm to be pursued to any length. While there was a respectable group of foreign-born voters in Savannah and Augusta,⁷⁵ the alignment in this campaign was based on other considerations.

The election was an exceedingly close one. In a total vote of 94,766 the majority of Johnson was only 510.⁷⁶ The defection clearly was in the Cherokee, once the citadel of Democracy in Georgia. Two years later, Johnson, succeeding himself, received almost seven thousand votes more than in 1853, in a total vote of 104,443.⁷⁷ By that time, the reconciliation had actually been made between the Union Democrats and the Southern Rights majority of the party. Nevertheless, the *Southern Banner* bravely claimed that only about a thousand Union Democrats had "refused to vote for Governor at all." The editor further "believed that the hostility excited by the events of '50 and '51, between the brethren of the Democratic family," had passed away with those events, and "that the unhappy spirit that prevented their reconciliation a year ago, has been succeeded by wiser counsels, . . ." He felt obliged, however, to warn the majority faction: "It now rests with our friends of the Southern Rights school to realize the hopes of the one class, or to justify the fears of the other." Some people were saying that the victory would give the Southern Rights men control of Georgia, and that they would turn on their Union Democratic allies and rend them. That way lay suicide for the party.⁷⁸

Howell Cobb's old friend, Thomas D. Harris, wrote to him with Cobb's possible election to the U. S. Senate in mind:—"I hope to God that your old district gave a generous vote to Johnson and returned a goodly number of Democrats to the Legislature." Harris heard in Washington that both "Jef. Davis" and Pierce wanted Cobb sent to the Senate. "If this be so and the legislature is an Administration legislature it seems to me

75. The Federal Census showed 6,452 foreign-born in Georgia in 1850 and 11,643 in 1860. Savannah and Chatham County in 1860 had 4,696 of this number and Richmond County (Augusta) had 1,771. Greene, "Politics in Georgia," Ch. I.

76. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Georgia, 1853-54* (Savannah, 1854), 34, official returns. Johnson received 47,638 and Jenkins 47,128. The *Southern Recorder*, Oct. 18, 1853, claimed that but for the defection of "many fire-eating Whigs" in the Fourth District (around LaGrange), who in 1852 had "joined the secessionists" and in 1853 supported Johnson, Jenkins would have won.

77. *Southern Watchman*, Oct. 25, 1855, returns of Johnson's second election in which he received 54,461 votes to Andrews' (the American party candidate) 43,821 and Overby's Temperance party vote of 6,261.

78. *Southern Banner*, Oct. 18, 1853.

there can be no such thing as fail for you.”⁷⁹ In September, however, there had appeared hints, in the previously conciliatory Democratic press, that Charles J. McDonald was the real leader of Georgia’s Democrats, and should represent the State in the Senate.⁸⁰ Almost simultaneously, Cobb made his decision to stump the State for Johnson and was rebuked by the Whig-Union press for lowering the dignity of his office by such behaviour.⁸¹ When the legislature met in November, it appeared that the Southern Rights men would indeed oppose Cobb with all their strength, and that the Union Democrats, even against Cobb’s wishes, would fight back with a will. One of the fiercest contests ever waged in Georgia developed over this Senate election.

It was noted that, in addition to the members of the legislature, “Distinguished Visitors” were numerous in Milledgeville as the session’s opening day drew near. Among the Southern Rights men present were Charles J. McDonald, Walter T. Colquitt, Alfred Iverson, Henry L. Benning, Henry G. Lamar, Charles Dougherty (former Whig), and Hugh Haralson. Also on hand were Alexander Stephens, Charles J. Jenkins, Robert Toombs, Francis Cone (once a law partner of Toombs), John W. H. Underwood of the Fifth District, and later even ex-Senator John M. Berrien.⁸² The public mind had been prepared for the election of a Senator to replace the Whig William C. Dawson. James Gardner of the *Augusta Constitutionalist*, true to his word, proposed that Cobb be given the seat, as his due. Union Democrats, he said, had not been represented on the party’s electoral ticket in 1852, after offering to compromise on it, and in Federal appointments they had been overlooked. The *Constitutionalist* had suggested Cobb’s cousin, Judge Henry Jackson of Savannah, for the nomination, but he had been removed from competition by his appointment as *charge d’affaires* to Austria. Judge Henry Lumpkin’s friends had come to the State convention with his nomination in mind, but had seen that he had not a chance. Hiram Warner, a Union Democrat, was put up, but received insultingly small support. Four of the six Democratic Congressmen elected in 1853 were Southern Rights men—in the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Districts (centering respectively

79. Thomas D. Harris to Cobb, Oct. 13, 1853, *Correspondence*, 326.

80. *Georgia Telegraph*, Sept. 20, 1853; correspondent “Warrior” urging all Democrats to vote, because “One vote may elect McDonald, Senator in the next Congress—.”

81. *Southern Recorder*, Sept. 21, 1853.

82. *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1853.

around Savannah, Columbus, Macon, and LaGrange) they had been nominated over Union Democrats. Now the majority group should, in electing a Senator, prove their goodwill for the Union minority. Hiram Warner and Howell Cobb were given credit for Johnson's election, and either, thought Gardner, would make a fine Senator.⁸³ For his opinions, Gardner's and all other "Newspaper Nominations" were rapped on the knuckles by the *Georgia Telegraph*. Although that paper had cultivated Cobb during the canvass, once it was over, the *Telegraph* declared that the legislature should be left alone to choose the Senator. Cobb's election was by no means conceded — it was probable that he, and also McDonald, Iverson, Colquitt, Warner, Chappell, and Lumpkin, deserved well of the Democratic party.⁸⁴

Cobb had assurances from his friends that they were working in his behalf, but he knew also that they had serious forebodings.⁸⁵ He prepared to take his leave of the chief executive's chair with the usual address to the legislature. A notable feature of this message was Cobb's strong stand for State rights, and Southern rights, in connection with the Lemmons slave case. In this controversy, a Mr. Lemmons had taken his slaves from Virginia to New York, *en route* to Texas by ship, and before

83. *Southern Banner*, Nov. 3, 1853, quoting the *Constitutionalist & Republic*.

84. *Georgia Telegraph*, Nov. 1, 1853. The *Georgian* of Savannah, the *Albany Patriot*, the *Columbus Times & Sentinel*, and the *Atlanta Intelligencer* were cited as agreeing with the Macon editors that discussions of the Senate election were "regrettable." But for the "untimely indiscretion" of the Constitutional Union legislature's having elected Toombs, in 1851, the legislature of 1853 would have had two Senate seats to fill, said the editor—one for the majority wing, one for the minority.

85. John T. Grant to Cobb, Oct. 18, 1853, *Correspondence*, 337, and Oct. 28, 1853, *Ga. Hist. Quart.*, VI, 1 (March, 1922), 49-50. Grant had asked many Whigs and Democrats of influence as to Cobb's prospects. The former were angry with Cobb, and would support Chappell, who might also attract enough Democratic votes to be elected. Toombs, whom Grant had visited lately, "both surprised and gratified" him by preferring Cobb to any other candidate of either party. Logan Bleckley, Southern Rights Democrat of Atlanta, was for Cobb, and would appreciate help in seeking the Solicitor's position in his circuit. Grant's second letter stated that he had to go to Mississippi on business he could not postpone, but he felt Cobb's chances were good—"Riley is for you . . . the Cherokee delegations are also for you. . . . Lucius Lamar is for Chappell . . . but if he finds the demonstration in your favor he will not make the fight. . . . I endeavored to get Hillyer to write to some of the members of his district, but his election is secure and he is perfectly easy. . . . Hoping that when I meet you again it will be as Senator Cobb. . . ." John Milledge, ex-Whig of Augusta, wrote to Cobb, Nov. 1, 1853 [in *Ga. Hist. Quart.*, VI, 1 (March, 1922)], 50: "My mind has been in such a state of anxiety in regard to your election. . . . Never will such an effort be made to defeat anyone as yourself, and if the Democrats allow it to be done, we may from this time henceforth in Geo. hang up our fiddle in the willows. . . . Our enemies will have triumphed, because to beat you now is their *last card*. The sensible men of the party should be on the ground and raise their voices against the course some of our men are pursuing. I understand that the Whigs intend voting for Warner & with his friends elect him. . . . The sentiment is general here for you, and our hopes for future success depend on it. . . . About what time will this election take place? What are your views? But I must go up. Write me if I can get a decent room."

he could sail with his slaves, they had, under a writ of *habeas corpus* granted to New York anti-slavery leaders, been freed. Although a public subscription had yielded enough money to reimburse Lemmons for his financial loss, he had appealed to a higher court of New York, and the Supreme Court of the nation seemed certain to receive it finally. Cobb wished, if that should happen, that the State of Georgia would "employ able counsel" to represent its interest, as a slaveholding community, before that highest tribunal. Even independent nations, without such mutual obligations as the States had to each other, accorded comity to each other's laws. When the States gave up their right to make treaties and declare war, Cobb solemnly declared, they did not give up their right to have their laws respected.⁸⁶

In the 1852 election season, the Union-Whig press had made much of its keen desire to see Southern rights, as involved in this Lemmons case, properly protected, and their solicitude had been ridiculed by the Democrats.⁸⁷ If Cobb intended by his Southern-rights stand in his valedictory to the legislature to placate his rivals, he might as well have spared himself the effort. No willingness to compromise was shown by the Southern Rights men. When John E. Ward was chosen Speaker and William T. Wofford, Clerk, for the lower house (both were strong Union Democrats, the first from Savannah and the second from Cass County in Cherokee Georgia), there seemed a good prospect for their Union minority to secure recognition generally.⁸⁸ The party caucus, however, destroyed any such hope. That group, trying to pick the Democratic nominee for the Senate seat, gave McDonald eighty votes, on the seventh ballot, to Cobb's fifteen and Alfred Iverson's ten. Joseph Dunagan, the venerable "boss of Hall County," then moved to postpone the election of a Senator until the 1855 session of the legislature.⁸⁹ His stubborn resistance to McDonald's candidacy was supported by William Anderson of Savannah, Singleton and Moon from

86. *House Journal*, 1853-54, pp. 8-33, message of Gov. Cobb to the legislature.

87. *Georgia Telegraph*, Dec. 7, 1852; *Southern Recorder*, Dec. 14, 1852.

88. *House Journal*, 1853-54, p. 7. A Southern Rights Democrat, John D. Stell of Fayette County, was chosen President of the Senate, and Hugh Moore of Sumter County, Secretary.

89. *Southern Recorder*, Nov. 22, 1853, account of the Democratic caucus proceedings. Since Dawson's term did not expire until March, 1855, the new Senator would not (unless a special session of Congress should be called) take his seat until December, 1855. He might well be elected, therefore, in November, 1855. It was the custom, however, to elect Senators as soon as possible, for a party might not keep its majority in the legislature at the following election.

Cherokee counties, and one Dr. Bailey—the “notorious five” according to the indignant McDonald press.⁹⁰ Seeing that they could not prevail against McDonald in the caucus, this group joined the Whigs and some other Union Democrats and repealed the Senate’s resolution to bring on the election of a Senator.⁹¹ If the Southern Rights men hoped to steam-roller the Union Democrats, they were disappointed. Matters stood at a standstill when, on December 21, the legislature adjourned until January 9, 1854.

The *Southern Banner*, considered Cobb’s mouthpiece, did not spring to his defense as an injured man. Instead, working for unity, it deplored the tendency shown by some to think of two kinds of Democrats in Georgia, whereas all were now united in the old national party.⁹² If the Southern Rights men needed Cobb, he was well aware that he also needed them. The editors of the *Georgia Telegraph*, who had recently advocated McDonald’s claims,⁹³ pocketed their pride and wrote Cobb that they hoped he would speak to the caucus. If anybody could bring the Union Democrats to see reason, it should be Cobb. Their writing was not, they said, connected with McDonald’s interests, “at least directly.”⁹⁴ Evidently Cobb agreed to do what was asked, for his friend, John H. Lumpkin, wrote him happily in late December:

“I see from the papers that you have been to Milledgeville and that you there made the great speech of your life. . . . There are but few men that could have made a speech under such circumstances. I frankly confess that I could not, It has at one stroke put you where you ought to have been by common consent of the political party to which you have always been attached. . . . I hope that the feeling that now prevails may be sufficient to elect you yet United States Senator at this session of the legislature.”

90. *Georgia Telegraph*, Dec. 27, 1853; *Southern Banner*, Jan. 19, 1854.

91. *Georgia Telegraph*, Dec. 6, 1853.

92. *Southern Banner*, Dec. 8, 1853. The editor stated that he refused to comment on the caucus proceedings. He merely pointed out the Richmond *Enquirer’s* uncompromising attitude in Virginia, and its effects, as an example of the harm a party could suffer from such division.

93. *Georgia Telegraph*, Dec. 27, 1853: “We had set our hearts upon the election of Gov. McDonald,” just as they had backed him for the governorship in 1851.

94. H. K. Green and Thomas C. Howard to Cobb, Dec. 3, 1853, *Correspondence*, 337-38. Only their “greatest solicitude for the future interests of the Democratic party in Georgia” impelled them to write. The “internecine warfare” then raging would ruin their party. Only Cobb could reconcile the two wings. They realised that he had tried, already, but—“if you were properly invited here will you not come and address us upon the state of party affairs. . . . [W]e are morally certain it would make you the *strongest* man in Georgia.”

Lumpkin had heard that McDonald would release his friends from their pledge to support him in the caucus, and that he would go into Pierce's cabinet.⁹⁵ Whether Cobb's effort would have the desired result, however, remained to be seen. There were independent men among the Union Democrats who might not follow Cobb or any other leader into a reconciliation with the Southern Rights men. Joseph Dunagan, for instance, indicated that he and the old Jackson-Union men would never be led by "Secession men" and he wanted that understood.⁹⁶ If Cobb could not carry his own Cherokee Democrats with him in his willingness to compromise, his position in the Democratic fold would be precarious indeed.

When the legislature re-convened in January, the Union-Whig press commented that Governor Johnson, in his first two months, had emulated Pierce's policy of appointing to State offices men from "the discordant elements of his party," in an effort to produce harmony.⁹⁷ His efforts, however, appeared to have had little effect. In the joint session at which the election of a Senator was ordered, the Whigs united and, withdrawing from the chamber, left the body without a quorum.⁹⁸ Finally, the Democratic caucus, in order to settle the matter, released the Democrats from voting for the party's nominee, McDonald. The

95. John H. Lumpkin to Cobb, Dec. 28, 1853, *Correspondence*, 338.

96. *Southern Banner*, Feb. 9, 1854, reprinting a letter from Dunagan to the *Cassville Standard*. The *Dalton Times* had accused Dunagan of acting like a Whig, and he denied this charge. He was a Jackson Democrat,—"one that holds to the great National Democracy, and this State's rights doctrine, that maintains that a State gave up none of her sovereignty in forming the Constitution, but by virtue of that undivided sovereignty can peaceably withdraw from the other States at pleasure, and thus break up this glorious Union, is not my doctrine; and I know it is not the doctrine of the great national Democracy;" Jenkins had been called a Union man in 1853, but Dunagan, remembering him as a "Nullifier" from 1832 to 1840, could not vote for him. Neither could he accept Herschel V. Johnson. Twice he had helped to make McDonald governor, against Dawson, who "was a Nullifier and maintained this secession doctrine." The Whigs would not name a real Union candidate, and, "as they would not come to us, we do not go to them. . . . I know about this time, every body call themselves Union men, for say they, the time has not come to dissolve the Union; when I hear men talk thus methinks I can almost hear Gen. Jackson swear by the Eternal—that the time never shall come, and the Federal Union must be preserved. I don't say that I would not resist aggressive acts of the Federal Government, but never will I secede from the Union. nor will I support those that maintain the propriety of such a measure, and shall continue to feel myself alienated from the high tariff men, from U. S. Bank men, and all . . . that do not construe the constitution, strictly according to the letter. The Union party of Georgia maintained their position with ability up till 1840" Since 1840, the Whigs had included those who opposed Jackson, except that "some distinguished and patriotic individuals in Georgia, who held honestly to the doctrine of peaceable secession," could not accept the Whig program of a national bank, etc., and therefore joined the Union Democratic party. The old Union leaders, however, were the genuine Democrats, and would not be led by these secession late-comers.

97. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 10, 1854. The editor hoped that "the masses . . . could not be tolled into the fold of the Reunited spoils party by a few nubbins of public patronage."

98. *Southern Banner*, Jan. 19, 1854.

Union-Whig press quickly denied that in a "scrub" race, such independent Democrats as Matthew Hall McAllister, John E. Ward, or even Cobb might attract enough Whig votes from Dawson to get a majority.⁹⁹ Alfred Iverson, put forward by the Southern Rights men when it was obvious that McDonald could not secure the Union Democrats' support, was called the "dernier resort."¹⁰⁰ On the sixteenth ballot, and by a majority of only two, Iverson was elected to the United States Senate. He had 117 votes, Dawson had ninety-nine, and other votes were scattered. The *Southern Banner*, supposedly speaking for Cobb, stoutly spoke for "the union of the different divisions of the party." Iverson would have its support— "Whatever may be the claims of any man upon the party, he has no right to be elevated upon its ruins."¹⁰¹

The Whig-Union press, by the joy with which it greeted the news of Cobb's defeat, recognized his pre-eminent leadership in the move to bring together the rival wings of his party. Wrote the *Journal & Messenger* of Macon:

. . . [P]rofound gratification at a result which shuts out Howell Cobb and C. J. McDonald from the Senate of the United States. . . . These men . . . have been the rival leaders of factions of the Democracy. . . . Cobb has been the fierce opponent and the laborious champion of the Secession Democracy in Georgia—the warm advocate of the Hunker Democracy of the North, and their fierce assailant—now abandoning the Democratic party as corrupt, unsound and denationalized by the heresies of Secession and Freesoil, now returning to it, aiding its thorough reorganization—abetting the election of a Secession Executive to succeed him, and exhibiting an extraordinary activity and industry in noisily protesting his devotion to the party he had abandoned, and a pertinacity equally extraordinary in urging his claims to office from it.¹⁰²

Cobb himself had every intention of maintaining his place as a Democrat in Georgia and also in the national party. His former allies, the old Whigs of the State, had abandoned hope of any other possibility. His correspondence with national figures in his party—such as Colin M. Ingersoll, Congressman from Connecticut,¹⁰³ and Stephen A. Douglas, the rising Democrat from

99. *Southern Recorder*, Jan. 17, 24, 1854.

100. *Savannah Daily Morning News*, Jan. 28, 1854, correspondent "Observer" from the State capital, Milledgeville.

101. *Southern Banner*, Jan. 26, 1854.

102. *Georgia Journal & Messenger*, Jan. 25, 1854.

103. Colin M. Ingersoll to Cobb, Jan. 20, 1854, *Correspondence*, 339-41. Ingersoll was worried because Pierce's Administration had unduly favored the free-soil "softs" among Northern Democrats, and thereby offended and weakened the "hards."

Illinois¹⁰⁴ — proves his interest in the party's condition in the nation at large, and his determination to keep his ties strong.

Both the Jackson-Union Democrats and the Georgia Whigs with whom they had temporarily joined in 1850-51 had been conservative, on the whole, in their stand on both national and State issues. Not so with the Calhoun wing, known since 1850 as the Southern Rights men in the Democratic party. Howell Cobb, heretofore a conservative, was maneuvered by the events of 1853-54 into a position in which he depended on these Southern Rights radicals for his recognition as a Democrat. With his help, they controlled the State; but his incomplete control over his Union minority made it impossible for him to demand his own terms when he returned to his party. It was important for Georgia and for the South that, after 1854, the State's conservative men no longer made her decisions. They might include a majority of the electorate, but they were never again united. Divided, they fell.

104. Stephen A. Douglas to Cobb, Apr. 2, 1854, *ibid.*, 343. Cobb evidently had written Douglas that he approved the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and the latter expressed pleasure at having the letter and the approval. In view of the Cobb delegates' efforts at Baltimore, in 1852, to prevent Douglas, as the Southern Rights favorite, from getting the Democratic nomination, this move of Cobb was remarkably friendly. Thomas H. Bayley also wrote to Cobb (he was a Democratic Congressman from Virginia), May 6, 1854, (*ibid.*, 343) that he feared the "hards" would not support the Nebraska bill, a leading Pierce measure, because the Administration had "put its iron heel upon them."



